BRILL

NUMEN 62 (2015) 152–168

NVMEN
brill.com/nu

The Construction of Heresy and the Creation of Identity: Epiphanius of Salamis and His Medicine-Chest against Heretics

Ingvild Sælid Gilhus
University of Bergen, Department of Archaeology,
History, Cultural Studies, and Religion
Postboks 7805, 5020 Bergen
ingvild.gilhus@ahkr.uib.no

Abstract

The article is about Epiphanius' use of metaphors in the *Panarion* to create boundaries between acceptable and non-acceptable religion. The stress is on how the various inventors of so-called heresies were made similar to different species of harmful animals, and how a comparative system of serpents and other animals was applied metaphorically. This explanatory model has multiple references to biblical texts. The article shows the persuasive power and emotional impact of the use of animals to describe heresies.

Keywords

Epiphanius – the Panarion – metaphor – heresy – animal

There was a considerable amount of religious freedom in the Roman Empire, leading to religious pluralism, varieties within different religions, and a "multi-religious" field. Judaism in the first centuries CE was a complex phenomenon, and so was its offshoot, Christianity.

* Parts of the present article have previously been published in a Norwegian language version in Gilhus 2008:33–44. Portions of that text are translated and incorporated in the present article with permission from the Norwegian publisher. The translations of the *Panarion* are from Frank Williams 1987–1994 and 2009.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2015 | DOI 10.1163/15685276-12341361

Christian pluralism had already flourished when the texts in the New Testament were written: four different gospels, each telling the same story in slightly different ways, and Paul's letters, with their own distinct approach, were among the texts that were included. All of the manifestations of religious diversity were not accepted. In Acts (8.9–14) we learn about Simon Magus who converted to Christianity, tried to purchase the gifts of the Holy Spirit in order to perform miracles, and was for that reason cursed by Peter. When Simon, in later sources, is cast in the role of the arch-heretic, this may suggest that he ran an alternative and competing — perhaps Christian — religious movement. The author of Revelation condemned people who followed the doctrine of Balaam and others who held the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. These may have been groups that were more lenient towards the pagan religion and society, and who held doctrines that were alternatives to John's own teaching. Simon Magus and the Nicolaitans later became part of the Negative Others who were denounced in Christian heresiological tradition.

According to such New Testament examples, Christians tolerated some manifestations of Christian pluralism, but not others. Generally, the construction of borders between an acceptable religion and its negative others was a strategy for establishing Christian identities. The Church was dependent on the heretical other to keep the faith pure, simply because it is not possible to be clean if dirt does not exist.

The champions of the Church developed a polemical discourse. By means of the concept of "heresy" authors like Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Eusebius, and Epiphanius construed identities for themselves and others. They also created dominant models and durable strategies for the classification of deviant others. Irenaeus, for instance, used a genealogical model according to which Simon Magus was the arch-heretic from whom all of the other heresies were thought to have developed. There was, he suggested, a family tree of heresy. Epiphanius took over the Irenaean genealogical model, but developed a model of his own as well, according to which the various inventors of heresies were similar to different species of harmful animals. The metaphorical use of animals to describe deviators from the true faith had been tried before, but never on the scale and never as systematically as in Epiphanius' writings of the late fourth century.[1]

The elaborate heresiological discourse of Epiphanius, the bishop of Salamis on Cyprus (368–403), had several aims. One was to create a comprehensive and global history of true beliefs and practices *versus* false beliefs and practices, in

1 The serpent had been used as a metaphor for heresy before Epiphanius, for instance by Irenaeus and Eusebius, but Epiphanius is alone in using the model of serpents and other animals systematically and throughout (Pourkier 1992:80).

other words Epiphanius had a scholarly interest in his project. Another aim was to carve out a model for an orthodox Christianity in opposition to all of the competing religious and philosophical movements — a truly theological aim. One of the strategies Epiphanius applied to make everything hang together — historically and theologically, cognitively and emotionally — was to develop key models and metaphors and to use them in a consistent way.

The focus in this article is on Epiphanius' application of metaphors to establish the pureness of the creed and the wickedness of sects as well as how, through heresiological discourse, he created boundaries between acceptable and non-acceptable religion.

The *Panarion*

Epiphanius' heresiological treatise has the revealing title of *Panarion*, "Medicine Chest." It was probably written in the years 374–377. The *Panarion* has a double purpose. It offers a prophylactic for those who are not yet smitten by heresy and an antidote for those that have been affected. The *pharmakon* or antidote which Epiphanius offers is an exposure of the real content of heresy coupled with a presentation of the true Christian doctrine.

In his work Epiphanius attacks eighty religious and philosophical schools. He wrote hundreds of pages and furnished his medicine chest with descriptions of heretical illnesses and antidotes. In the preface he describes his great work in this way:

> Since I am going to tell you the names of the sects and expose their unlawful deeds like poisons and toxic substances, and at the same time match the antidotes with them as cures for those already bitten and preventatives for those who will have this misfortune, I am drafting this preface for the scholarly to explain the "Panarion," or chest of remedies for those whom savage beasts have bitten. It is composed of three books containing eighty sects, symbolically represented by wild animals or snakes. (*Panarion, Proem* I, 1, 1)

The material for his huge work comes from different sources (*Panarion, Proem* II, 2, 4). The *Panarion* contains a wealth of information and source materials copied from earlier heresiological works and from texts that belong to various groups, as well as from Epiphanius' own experiences and observations. Epiphanius was well informed. He knew the sources, some through firsthand experience and others less personally. His purpose was both to make them

known and to refute them. In this way, the *Panarion* gives unique access to the Christian landscape as it was conceptualized by a prominent spokesman for the Church towards the end of the fourth century.

According to Epiphanius' own account, he had some firsthand experiences with what he described. In fact, in his youth in Egypt he had been subject to what one using a modern expression could call "flirty fishing" (Gilhus 1997:245–247). Epiphanius had met women from a sect that he gives several names to, one of them being Gnostics, and they had tried to seduce him into their congregation:

> For I happened on this sect myself, beloved, and was actually taught these things in person, out of the mouths of people who really undertook them. Not only did women under this delusion offer me this line of talk, and divulge this sort of things to me. With impudent boldness moreover, they even tried to seduce me themselves. (*Panarion* 26, 17, 4)

Like several other people, groups, and sects that Epiphanius describes, the women of the sect he calls Gnostics are accused of sexual misconduct. In other cases, he accuses groups of being on the contrary too ascetic, for instance by being against marriage and by not eating meat.

Modern readers of the *Panarion* have few opportunities to check Epiphanius' use of sources, because in most cases these sources no longer exist. Apparently, because scholars have doubted Epiphanius' sources and his use of them, and have been blind to its other qualities, very little research has been devoted to the *Panarion* until recently. Averil Cameron has pointed out that "heresiology" is an embarrassment to modern scholars and has asked for a study of the discourses and rhetorical techniques that are applied in the descriptions of heresies, what she calls "the poetics of heresy" (2005:193–194). In line with her request, scholarship has in recent years turned to the discourse of heresy and to what heresiological works reveal about the religious, cultural, and social situation at the time they were written, rather than how these works can be used to reconstruct historical people, processes, and events.[2]

Heresy and the History of Religions

Epiphanius applies the concept of *hairesis* to describe sects and groups. The term means "way of thinking" or "thought system," and it was originally a

2 Bauer 1934 introduced the new approach. Also important is Le Boulluec 1985.

neutral designation.[3] Among Christians, who found the idea of plural thought systems problematic, the word *hairesis* came to be used for people whose beliefs deviated from those of the Church. Like Irenaeus, Epiphanius relates the heresies to each other in a huge genealogical system, "a global genealogy of heresies" (Vallée 1987:70). Irenaeus seems to be dependent on Justin Martyr's lost work *Syntagma* when he introduces a succession of teachers and disciples and traces them back to Simon. This huge genealogical system gives Irenaeus' adversaries a certain unity by revealing their common history and dependency upon each other. Irenaeus then uses this unity as a weapon against them. Averil Cameron has pointed out that Epiphanius refers to two different genealogies (2005:199). One is the *traditio haereticorum*, and the other is the *traditio legis*, the tradition of heresy opposed to the legitimate tradition of the Church.

When Epiphanius and others among the learned men of the Church sought to establish two different genealogies, this is, of course, a misrepresentation of reality. The growth of Christianity was a result of what retrospectively was regarded as a conflict between orthodoxy and heresy, but the process was not necessarily thought of in such terms from the beginning. The development of the Church was dominated by battles about who had the right to define the creed, and in struggles between factions and groups in order to get a monopoly on interpretation. If things had worked out differently, we might have had groups called "Epiphanianism" and "Clementinism," instead of "Valentinianism" and "Marcionism."

The treatment of contemporary Hellenistic culture and religious varieties, Christian and others, changed over the three centuries in which Christianity went from being a minority religion to becoming the religion of the empire. Heresiology in the second century is not the same as heresiology in the fourth century: "In the fourth century, the political reception of an imperial 'Christianity' defined as a universal transcendent truth and exclusive social identity, in opposition to a 'Hellenism' defined simply as pagan tradition outside it, has led to our theological and historical reading of opposing 'religions' outside a common culture in the earlier centuries" (Lyman 2003:220). In the late fourth century, heresy was criminalized. It became a public crime, an object of legislation, and a cause for punishment.

The heresies that Irenaeus described were Christian sects. Hippolytus included the Jews as well, while Epiphanius surveyed the entire Mediterranean and Middle Eastern history of religions and philosophies in his description of

3 For the theme of *hairesis* and its development, see Le Boulluec 1985; Iricinschi and Zellentin 2008:3–5; and Thomassen 2008.

heresies. Barbarism, Scythianism, Hellenism, and Judaism (Colossians 3.11); according to Epiphanius, all of these entities are heresies. It is worth noting that Epiphanius discusses what had earlier been conceived of as ethnic categories, for example, Scythes and Hellenes, and made them into religious movements. People were now categorized according to religious belonging, and something kindred to a concept of religion appeared (Boyarin 2005:206).

In Epiphanius' use, "heresy" is a negative word, except in relation to the twenty pre-Christian religions and philosophical schools described on the first pages of his work, starting with the five ethnic categories mentioned above. When used to describe pre-Christian religions and philosophical schools, the concept seems to have a more neutral meaning (Vallée 1981:75–77). Accordingly, serpents and other animals are not used as epithets to refer to pre-Christian heresies, but are only applied to those that come after Christ.

Epiphanius assumes that there are eighty heresies. This number is not based on an investigation of the actual historical situation. Rather, it is derived from one of the key metaphors in the *Panarion*. In its introduction and concluding sections, "About the Faith" (*De fide*), the number is linked to the Song of Songs and the eighty concubines mentioned in this text (2, 8; 6, 8; 21, 1).[4] The concubines are contrasted with the one true bride, who is likened to a dove (6.9): "One is my dove, my perfect one; 'that is the holy bride and catholic Church herself' " (*De fide* 35, 3, 5). The dove, metaphorically speaking, is an innocent and generally positively evaluated animal. Later in the *Panarion*, it is combined with the dominant metaphor of the serpent. (This linkage does not happen without the dove getting her feathers ruffled. We will return to the downfall of the dove below).

What Epiphanius has created in the *Panarion*, in reality, is a universal history of religions, probably the first history of religions ever. The weakness of the *Panarion*, of course, is that it is extremely biased. If one writes from the point of view that most religious and philosophical movements are inspired by the devil, the result must be rather one-sided. The *Panarion* is written as a history of heresy. It became paradigmatic for later works to such a degree that from Epiphanius' time, the late fourth century, to the nineteenth century,

4 Some of the groups, such as the Stratiotics and Socratites, are not mentioned elsewhere, and are most likely inventions. Massalians (heresy 80) seems to be a "rest category" for all of the types of the ascetic groups that Epiphanius and the Church were skeptical towards; see Caner 2002:101. In a similar way, another effect of Epiphanius' "creative hermeneutics" "may have been to turn multiform phenomena into monolithic entities" (King 2008:32).

all religions, except one's own branch of Christianity, were considered to be different degrees of heresy.[5]

Serpents and Other Evil Animals

Epiphanius introduced wild animals, especially serpents, as his main models to describe heresies. The animals that Epiphanius refers to are not based on fantasy. In fact, Epiphanius derived his knowledge about snakes from one of the countless handbooks that were used to treat people for the bites of poisonous animals. He had consulted a specialist on snakes, Nicander, and other authors within the field of natural history (*Proem* II, 3, 1–5, Dummer 1973:299). By mining the animal world for metaphors and allegories, Epiphanius is part of a general tendency in ancient Christianity where authors were more interested in metaphorical animals and saw them as more significant than real ones (Gilhus 2006:270).

One of at least sixty examples of animals is found in Epiphanius' description of the Gnostics, mentioned above. This group is compared to "the extremely dreadful snake that the ancients called the pangless viper" (26, 19, 2). Epiphanius' main accusation against the Gnostics is that in "performing their filthy act either with men or with women they forbear insemination, rendering impossible the procreation God has given his creatures" (26, 19, 3). Epiphanius and the Church are in favor of celibacy and of marriage, and they are against same-sex relations as well as non-procreative sex. When measured against these standards, the Gnostics are doubly bad. The serpent that illustrates their evilness is described like this:

> When the pangless viper grew amorous, female for male and male for female, they would twine together, and the male would thrust his head into the female's gaping jaws. And she, in the throes of passion, would bite off the male's head and so swallow the poison that dripped from its mouth, and conceive a pair of snakes of the same kind within her, a male and a female. When this pair had come to maturity in her belly and had

5 While Justin is often seen as the inventor of the new genre of heresiology (Le Boulluec 1985:110–112), Epiphanius made the genre all-inclusive. In the words of Averil Cameron, "Baroque in its variations and its ornaments, Christian heresiology did not of course begin in late antiquity with the extraordinarily inventive, even fictive, catalogues contained in the *Panarion*, or 'Medicine-Chest,' of Epiphanius of Salamis in the 370s, but from that moment on it never looked back" (2005:193).

> no way of being born, they would tear their mother's side and be born like that, so that both their father and their mother perished. This is why they called it the pangless viper; it has no experience of the pangs of birth. It is more dreadful and fearsome than all the snakes, since it carries out its own extermination within itself and receives its dirt by mouth; and this crack-brained sect is like it. (*Panarion* 26, 19, 4–6)

The "pangless viper" illustrates several things. Chief among them is the evil caused by sexually active and offensive females and the disastrous effects they have on themselves and others. So much for flirty fishing! There is an intended similarity between the serpent, the main flaws, and cruelties of the sect. The Phrygians/Montanists are accused of stabbing the body of a baby to get its blood to drink. They are likened to the "viper of hemorrhage, whose mischief is to drain blood from its victims' entire bodies and so cause their deaths" (*Panarion* 48, 15, 6). One wonders to which degree the stories about the serpents steer the stories of the sects and *vice versa*.

Some of the stories about the serpents are rather complicated, such as, for instance, the one that is used to illustrate the evils of Origen. In addition, there is a lingering suspicion that the simile is not quite as congruent as Epiphanius will have it. According to Epiphanius (who legitimates his story by referring to naturalists), vipers kill dormice and their young. When the vipers hunt more dormice than they can eat, they blind them and feed them with food and venom. If people take these blinded dormice for food, then they will be poisoned. As for Origen, he was blinded by his Greek education, he has spat out venom for his followers and has "become poisonous food for them, harming more people with the poison by which you yourself have been harmed" (*Panarion* 64, 72, 8–9). It seems, in the end, that Origen is both a poisonous serpent and a poisoned dormouse.

The genealogical model and the serpent model were sometimes combined. For instance, this is the case in the presentation of Satornilus and his relation to Basilides. Satornilus was a learned Christian who flourished in Antioch around 120 CE. He was against marriage, which he claimed was invented by Satan, and he did not eat meat. When Epiphanius compares Satornilus to a serpent and connects him to the genealogical model, he does it in the following way:

> So whether, like a viper, Satornilus got his venom from the ancients and has imparted it to Basilides, or whether Basilides imparted it to Satornilus, let us leave their poison behind us, deadly as it is, and coming from such serpents as these, (but) weakened and deprived of its strength with the Lord's teaching as with an antidote. (*Panarion* 23, 7, 3)

The transmission of knowledge, in this case, is not made by means of a father-son model like it was according to the ideals of apostolic succession and monasticism, where kinship language was used strategically to mark one's position as legitimate (Buell 1999:15; Burrus 2000:34), but by means of an injection of poison from one serpent to the other.

In addition to serpents, Epiphanius refers to several other species of animals, such as scorpions, fish, and insects — the Nazoreans, for instance, heresy 29, are likened to "a stinging insect that is small, and yet causes pain with its poison" (*Panarion* 29, 9, 5) — but also moles, chameleons, and lizards. Heracleon, who taught in Rome in the second century, was a pupil of the Christian Gnostic Valentinus, and was known for his commentary on the Gospel of John (the first commentary of a New Testament text ever) gets the dubious honor of being compared to a lizard:

> For Heracleon may justly be called a lizard. This is not a snake but a hard-skinned beast as they say, something that crawls on four feet, like a gecko. The harm of its bite is negligible, but if a drop of its spittle strikes a food or drink, it causes the immediate death of those who have any. Heracleon´s teaching is like that. (*Panarion* 36, 6, 7)

Epiphanius obviously thinks that the spittle of the lizard poisoned food, a commonly held belief that made people kill the animal. The power of these animals to harm humans is considerably exaggerated.

Conceptual Metaphors

Epiphanius' point of departure is a folk model for how things are linked together. The model is usually called the Great Chain. This chain includes a hierarchy of humans, animals, plants, inanimate objects, and a hierarchy of properties that characterize each form of being. Humans, for instance, are characterized by reason, animals by instinctual behavior, and plants by biological functions, but each form has all of the attributes of the lower forms as well (Lakoff and Turner 1989:167). Connected to the Great Chain is the idea that all things have an essential nature. The system becomes metaphorical when a particular level of the chain is used to understand another level (Kövecses 2002:126). When the GENERIC IS SPECIFIC metaphor is linked to this conceptual complex, "it allows us to comprehend general human character traits in

terms of well-understood nonhuman attributes; and, conversely, it allows us to comprehend less well-understood aspects of the nature of animals and objects in terms of better-understood human characteristics" (Lakoff and Turner 1989:172). In each case, the highest-ranking properties available are picked out and used metaphorically (Lakoff and Turner 1989:173).

In the domain of animal life, the non-human is understood in terms of the human. There exist "well-elaborated schemas characterizing what animals are like, and we usually understand their characteristics metaphorically in terms of the characteristics of human beings" (Lakoff and Turner 1989:193). However, humans do not only explain animals, but the animals — that are already interpreted as humans — are in turn used to explain humans (Lakoff and Turner 1989:195–197; Kövecses 2002:125). The conceptual metaphor that allows us to do this is PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS and HUMAN BEHAVIOR IS ANIMAL BEHAVIOR. This means, in the case of Epiphanius, that the quintessential characteristics of serpents and other animals are mapped onto Christian sects and sect leaders in a way that these characteristics become the quintessential characteristics of the sects.

Into this exploiting of folk models and generally accepted metaphors must also be added the concept of ABSTRACT COMPLEX SYSTEMS. One subgroup of this Complex Systems Metaphor is SOCIETY IS A PERSON (Kövecses 2002:127). Society can be changed for worldview, political system, or social organization (Kövecses 2002:129). The use of the body as a source domain implies that inappropriate conditions are illnesses (Kövecses 2002:127). The metaphorical conception of illicit religion as a disease is known from other authors. Pliny the Younger describes Christianity as a "contagious superstition" and says that the infection of this superstition has spread through cities, villages, and country areas (*Complete Letters* 10, 96, 9–10; see Martin 2004:1–2). Eusebius calls polytheism "the ancient disease" (*Ecclesiastical History* 2, 3, 2; see Martin 2004:114). When Epiphanius explains the connection between the Nicolaitans and the Gnostics he describes it as the passing on of an infection: "For as bodies contract infection from other bodies through inoculation, a malignant itch, or leprosy, so the so-called Gnostics are partly united with the Nicolaitans, since they took their cues from Nicolaus himself and his predecessors — I mean Simon and the others" (*Panarion* 25, 7, 2).

Epiphanius also presupposes more generally, in his use of harmful animals, that inappropriate conditions are illnesses caused by active agents, for example serpents. Those who have invented the different heresies are, metaphorically speaking, poisonous serpents that kill and make people ill.

Emotional Impact and Metaphorical Consistency

Epiphanius took his point of departure in the Great Chain, but elaborated upon it so that it better served his purpose. He turned vague expressive metaphors with a low clarity, but a high degree of richness, like general references to serpents and scorpions, into explanatory metaphors with a high degree of clarity by, in many cases, identifying the genus and species of the animal he referred to and pairing them with specific heresies. Each sect (except for the twenty pre-Christian ones) gets its serpent or another animal. This way of using the source domain (animals) to understand the target domain (heresies) contributed to producing a strong perspective, usually seen as the "natural" one (Stockwell 2002:108). In this way, Epiphanius contributed to establish what was considered to be the correct way of understanding heresies.

This explanatory model, where heresies and their inventors are animals and each heresy is one specific animal, is given added expressive qualities and richness through multiple references to biblical texts. In the Bible, the prototypical serpent is a harmful and poisonous creature that is closely related to the serpent of Genesis. This reptile connotes Satan: "And see how far the serpent, the deceiver of the Ophites has gone in mischief! Just as he deceived Eve and Adam at the beginning so even he does now by concealing himself — both now and in the Jewish period up until Christ's coming" (*Panarion* 37, 1, 3). Epiphanius makes a distinction between Satan and the Genesis serpent when he says that "[i]t was the snake who spoke in the snake" (*Panarion* 37, 1, 6). The serpent-like nature of the devil does not pertain to his exterior, but lies in his character: "Indeed, sacred scripture calls the devil a serpent; certainly not because he looks like one, but because he appears extremely crooked to men, and because of the treacherous fraud which was at the first perpetrated through a snake" (*Panarion* 37, 2, 3).

The connection between Satan and the Genesis serpent gave connotations of cosmic proportion to mundane serpents and their metaphorical clones. Malicious metaphorical reptiles are also present in the New Testament, for instance in the exhortation "to tread on serpents and scorpions" (Luke 10.19; Mark 16.17–18; Psalm 90.13) and in the expression "brood of vipers" to characterize opponents (Matthew 3.7; 23.33; Luke 3.7; see Pourkier 1992:79). When a comparative system of serpents and wild animals is introduced as a source domain for the target domain heresies, it offers endless possibilities for making theological points (Gilhus 2006:241).

Epiphanius combines an explanatory model based on real species of animals, with an expressive model based on mythical conceptualizations of

animals. In some cases, he also omits a specific reference for a more general one; for instance, the Archontics are likened to "the tangled malignity of serpents" (*Panarion* 40, 8, 7):

> For in a way the poisonous emission of their imposture has been taken at random from many snakes. It has the dragon's arrogance, for example, the treachery of the toad that inflates itself, the pull in the opposite direction of the gudgeon's breath, the pride of the quick-darting serpent, and calamine's uselessness. (*Panarion* 40, 8, 8)

Another example of how Epiphanius combines conceptions and metaphors is in his description of the Nicolaitans. He compares the flute, a flute player, and Satan to a serpent: The flute is a copy of the serpent through which the Devil spoke and deceived Eve. The flute-player, "throws his head back as he plays and bends it forward, he leans right and leans left like the serpent." The devil "makes these gestures too, to display blasphemy of the heavenly host and to destroy earth's creatures utterly while at the same time getting the world into his toils, wreaking havoc right and left on those who trust the imposture, and are charmed by it as by the notes of an instrument" (*Panarion* 25, 4, 10–11; see Gilhus 2006:241). The passage plays on the connection between serpents and sexuality; an added point is that in antiquity homosexuality was sometimes connected to playing flutes. Nicolaus himself is finally characterized as a newt, "which comes from the water to land and returns to the water again" (*Panarion* 26, 7, 3). An explanation of why Nicolaus is likened to a newt is not given. It probably refers to Nicolaus' attempts to control his sexual incontinence, but in the end has to give up and falls back, not only on "normal" sex, but on what Epiphanius considered to be abnormal sexual practices (*Panarion* 25, 1, 6). Water refers to the chaotic existence of sinful living.

Epiphanius played on the readers' emotions. He is quite explicit that he wanted to create a maximum emotional effect on his audience, similar to the way the expert on serpents, Nicander, and his colleagues had done. According to Epiphanius, "those authors made a diligent effort, not to point evil out, but to frighten people and ensure their safety, so that they would recognize the dreadful dangerous beasts and be safe and escape them by God's power, by taking care not to engage with such deadly creatures if they encountered them, and were menaced by their breath or bite, or by the sight of them" (*Proem* 11, 3, 3). Epiphanius chose a similar strategy. It was a point to frighten the audience. The worthy bishop described the heretics' deviances from the true doctrine and their evil practices in a vivid language, not sparing the reader and not leaving out juicy details.

Part of the persuasive power of Epiphanius' work was that he combined different models and conceptual metaphors to create an effect. We have seen that the model of the serpents was associated with the genealogical model when one serpent infused its poison into another in the case of Satornilus and Basilides. When the spread of heresy from one sect to another was likened to the spread of disease, the connection between infection and poison is close. The animals to which Epiphanius refers have the means to harm and poison by stinging or biting the "body" of the Church, and thus make fatal wounds. The image of the poisonous animals is thus implicitly connected to the image of the Church and to the believers who constitute a pure body, the body of Christ. By implicitly linking the harmful animals to the body of Christ, Epiphanius made connotations to one of the key symbols of Christianity.

Heresy 80 is an example of how Epiphanius weaves a complex web that links his dominant models and metaphors to biblical quotations and allusions, in this case, with the bride/whore theme (Gaca 2003:160–189). The metaphorical linking of heresies, concubines, and animals connects concubines with animals. As mentioned above, the heresies, the eighty concubines who are likened to serpents and other animals, are contrasted with the true creed, the bride, who is likened to a dove: "But his bride too is a peaceable dove, with no poison, or teeth like mill-stones, or stings — unlike all these people with their snake-like appearance and sprouting of venom, each eager to prepare some poison for the world and harm his converts" (*Panarion* 35, 3, 8).

In most animal metaphors, the source domain characterizes the target domain in a negative way, but not always. However, there is a problem with animal metaphors (at least it is a problem if it is looked at more closely). The problem is that animals have more characteristics than those that are transferred to the target domain. Epiphanius discusses this problem in connection with the proverbial dove in his refutation of heresy 37. In this refutation, he struggles with a saying in Matthew: "Be ye wise as the serpent and harmless as the dove" (Matthew 10.16) (*Panarion* 37, 7, 6). The dove causes problems:

> For that matter, how can we imitate the dove either without keeping clear of evil — though certainly, in many ways doves are not praiseworthy. Doves are insatiable and incontinent and incessantly promiscuous, lecherous, given to the pleasure of the moment, and weak and small besides. But because of the harmlessness, patience and forbearance of doves — and even more, because of the Holy Spirit's appearance in the form of a dove — the divine Word would have us imitate the will of the Holy Spirit and the harmlessness of the harmless dove and be wise in good but innocent in evil. (*Panarion* 37, 8, 7–9)

The dove in this quote is depicted in anthropomorphic language that renders it rather disgusting. In the bishop's enumeration of its qualities, the bad qualities of the bird far outdo its good ones. Epiphanius contrasts the proverbial and metaphorical dove with real doves, as he sees them, and "shows that the connection between 'real' doves and symbolic ones is slight and selective, indeed" (Gilhus 2006:8). In this way he also shows, what present-day theorists of metaphors know very well, that an animal can be mapped in several ways. Perhaps Epiphanius also reveals that in his thought all animals are strongly associated with promiscuity and sexual misbehavior. This makes them even better to think with in relation to sects, but more problematic, as we have seen in relation to the Holy Spirit.

Another example of the combination of metaphors that, in a similar way to the combination of serpents and concubines, helps to give the *Panarion* cognitive consistency as well as persuasive power and emotional impact is the combination of PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS (meaning heretics are serpents) with another prominent conceptual metaphor, LIFE IS A JOURNEY. The combination reappears several times in the text, for instance, at the end of the *Panarion* in *De fide*, when the Christian life is likened to a journey:

> We have sailed across the shoreless sea of the blasphemies of each sect (*hairesis*), with great difficulty crossed the ocean of their shameful, repulsive mysteries, given the solutions to their hosts of problems, and passed their wickedness by. And we have approached the calm lands of the truth, after negotiating every rough place, enduring every squall, foaming, and tossing of billows, and, as it were, seeing the swell of the sea, and its whirlpools, its shallows none too small, and its places full of dangerous beasts, and experiencing them through words. (*Panarion, De fide* 1, 1–3)

By describing all of the eighty heresies and refuting them, Epiphanius had accomplished the task he had set for himself. In line with his key model and its prototypical animal, the serpent, the goal (to destroy each and every heresy) has been expressed by means of sixty metaphorical varieties; for instance, "trampling them with firmly placed sandal — that is, with the Gospel's exact words" (*Panarion* 58, 4, 17); striking it "with the wood of the cross" (*Panarion* 61, 8, 5); or scotching and maiming it and then "stomp[ing] on it, leav[ing] it dead after trampling it" (*Panarion* 73, 38, 5).

Finally, Epiphanius reaches his goal. He has written "the complete heresiology." The bishop rounds off his narrative by treading on heresy 80, the Massalians, (see n. 5 above) "with the shoe of the Gospel, like a many-footed, ugly, misshapen and foul-smelling chameleon." He invites the readers to "give

thanks to God in all things and glorify the father and the Son, the Son in the father, with the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen" (*Panarion* 80, 11, 7).

Conclusion

The Church's history is a retrospective construction according to which the Church at each stage of its development took a predestined, normative course through time. One of the functions of heresiology is to rewrite the past so that the past is brought in harmony with the ideal present, as one or more of the chief characters interpret it.

Doctrinal variety, according to the Church's self-understanding, was usually conceived of as negative. But it is reasonable to ask if the complexity of early Christianity, with its different and competing doctrines and practices, in reality made this religion more able to compete successfully in the pluralistic religious market of its day than if it had not contained diversity from the beginning. By its multiple approaches Christianity catered to different religious demands and nourished divergent identity constructions at the same time. The Church's political struggles, including the rhetoric of heresy, may have promoted rather than hampered the growth of the new religion, not only because the Christians made themselves noticed through these struggles, but also because the rhetoric of heresy vividly illustrates one of the core values of the new religion, namely, the fight against evil. Sects were ultimately from Satan and were the work of demons. In Epiphanius' fight against heretics in the *Panarion*, boundaries were created between orthodoxy and heterodoxy. Through polemical discourse, Epiphanius took part in the cosmic battle on God's side. The polemical boundaries that were created against its various negative others, the heretics, have in many ways been normative for the Church's history as a discipline.

Epiphanius' catalogue of heresies was hugely influential. When humans are labeled as animals, their humanity is denied. Animals are used to mark boundaries, not least towards those with whom one has much in common — like the different Christian movements and groups in late antiquity had with each other. When a comparative system of serpents and other animals is used metaphorically to describe heresies, it gives countless possibilities to score theological points at the expense of others. One may think that Epiphanius is bizarre and that he is embarrassing. However, one should not overlook that the genre of heresiology reflects core values in the Christian universe, the metaphysical struggle against evil, and represents a rather effective marketing of those values.

References

Bauer, Walter. 1934. *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Boyarin, Daniel. 2004. *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Buell, Denise Kimber. 1999. *Making Christians: Clement of Alexandria and the Rhetoric of Legitimacy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Burrus, Virginia. 2000. *"Begotten, Not Made": Conceiving Manhood in Late Antiquity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Cameron, Averil. 2005. "How to Read Heresiology." In Dale B. Martin and Patricia Cox Miller (eds.), *The Cultural Turn in Late Ancient Studies: Gender, Asceticism, and Historiography*, Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 193–212.

Caner, Daniel. 2002. *Wandering, Begging Monks: Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Monasticism in Late Antiquity*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Dummer, Jürgen. 1973. "Ein naturwissenschaftliches Handbuch als Quelle für Epiphanius von Constantia." *Klio* 55:289–99.

Epiphanius. 1915. *Panarion, Vol I*. Karl Holl (ed.). Berlin: Akademie-Verlag.

———. 1980–1985. *Panarion, Vol II–III*. Karl Holl and Jürgen Dummer (eds.). Berlin: Akademie-Verlag.

———. 1987–1994. *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis, Vol. I–II*. Frank Williams (trans.). Leiden: Brill.

———. 2009. *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis, Book I (Sects 1–46)*. Frank Williams (trans.). 2nd ed. Leiden and Boston: Brill.

Gaca, Kathy L. 2003. *The Making of Fornication: Eros, Ethics, and Political Reform in Greek Philosophy and Early Christianity*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Gilhus, Ingvild. S. 1997. "Family Structures in Gnostic Religion." In Halvor Moxnes (ed.), *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor*, London: Routledge, 235–249.

———. 2006. *Animals, Gods, and Humans: Changing Attitudes to Animals in Greek, Roman, and Early Christian Ideas*. London and New York: Routledge.

———. 2008. "Biskop Epifanios fra Salamis og 'Medisinskrinet mot kjettere.' " In Tomas Hägg (ed.), *Kjetterne og kirken. Fra antikken til i dag*, Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press, 33–44.

Iricinschi, Eduard, and Holger M. Zellentin. 2008. "Making Selves and Making Others: Identity and Late Antique Heresiologies." In Eduard Iricinschi and Holger M. Zellentin (eds.), *Heresy and Identity in Late Antiquity*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1–27.

King, Karen. 2008. "Social and Theological Effects of Heresiological Discourse." In Eduard Iricinschi and Holger M. Zellentin (eds.), *Heresy and Identity in Late Antiquity*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 28–49.

Kövecses, Zoltán. 2002. *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lakoff, George, and Mark Turner. 1989. *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Le Boulluec, Alain. 1985. *La notion d'hérésie dans la littérature grecque, IIe–IIIe siècles*. Paris: Etudes augustiniennes.

Lyman, J. Rebecca 2003. "Hellenism and Heresy." *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 11(2):209–222.

Martin, Dale B. 2004. *Inventing Superstition: From the Hippocratics to the Christians*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Pourkier, Aline. 1992. *L'hérésiologie chez Épiphane de Salamine*. Paris: Beauchesne.

Stockwell, Peter. 2002. *Cognitive Poetics: An Introduction*. London: Routledge.

Thomassen, Einar. 2008. "Kjetteribegrepets opprinnelse og de første kjetteriene." In Tomas Hägg (ed.), *Kjetterne og kirken. Fra antikken til i dag*, Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press, 12–32.

Vallée, Gérard. 1981. *A Study in Anti-Gnostic Polemics: Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Epiphanius*. Waterloo, Ont.: Published for the Canadian Corporation for Studies of Religion by Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

Copyright of Numen: International Review for the History of Religions is the property of Brill Academic Publishers and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.